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## **NEWS**

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**Statement of the  
Honorable Herbert H. Bateman  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Readiness  
Joint Hearing With The  
Subcommittee on Military Personnel  
on  
"The View From The Field"  
March 4, 1997**

Good morning. Today the subcommittee on Military Readiness and the subcommittee on Military Personnel are meeting jointly to get the view from the field on readiness and personnel issues from several groups of military personnel from a wide range of geographic areas. Yesterday, the subcommittee on Readiness conducted a field hearing at Langley AFB, Virginia which was very informative. At that hearing, we concentrated on readiness issues that directly affect the capabilities of our military forces.

Today we will continue to look at these issues and also look at many of the readiness issues that affect people, quality of life, and families. We are here today, not so much as to ask questions, but rather, to listen to our witnesses give their own personal perspectives on current readiness and to give us their views on life in the military today.

There are several reasons why it is important for the members of the committee to hear about these important readiness issues. As many will remember, two years ago while the Pentagon leadership was claiming that U.S. forces were more ready than they had ever been, the committee found indications of a serious readiness problem in the military services. At that time, the committee determined the services were in the early stages of a long-term systemic readiness problem that was not confined to any one quarter of a fiscal year.

Some of the indicators that led us to an awareness of these problems were that all of the F-15E and two-thirds of the F-15C air crews based in Europe needed waivers from training requirements, two of the six Army contingency corps units, the most ready in the force, reported significantly reduced readiness ratings, and 28 Navy and Marine Corps tactical aviation squadrons had to ground more than half of their aircraft during September 1994. Although anecdotal, the committee believed that these indicators were indeed warning signs that could not be ignored.

In response to these concerns, the Clinton Administration began taking heed of these warning signs. They have given significant attention to protecting military readiness as one of their primary objectives in the formulation of subsequent budget requests, including the fiscal year 1998 budget request that is currently before the Congress.

In an attempt to measure the Administration's success these past two years, the committee staff conducted a comprehensive readiness review during the Fall of last year. In addition, I, and many other Members of Congress, have been meeting with members of the military services over the past few months.

The preliminary results of the review and the meetings indicate that readiness is not improving, and may be in a decline. In this context, it is essential that we test the Pentagon claim that the U.S. military is "as ready as we have ever been."<sup>1</sup>

One of the possible reasons there is such a disparity in the established assessment of readiness by our military leaders, and a more accurate, real-world assessment of readiness, may be founded in the way we measure readiness.

The systems currently in place to measure readiness do not take into account many of the indicators that would give a more accurate readiness picture. Some of these indicators may be the amount of time individuals are away from home; the stresses of working harder and longer and doing more with less; the quantity and quality of military training and other measurements that are not currently used to assess readiness.

Readiness is a perishable commodity — by the time you find out it is broken, it is already too late. It is important that we hear what is really going on from a cross section of our military service members who are "in the know" on these issues. Our aim today is to hear from those that have to deal with the day-to-day challenges with keeping readiness at an acceptable level while continuing to maintain preparedness for high intensity combat operations in a resource constrained environment.

We are very fortunate to have four panels of individuals representing each of the military services and family members, from all levels of command and supervision. The first panel is composed of commanders from major operational commands to give us their views from the big picture point of view. Our second panel will consist of senior non-commissioned officers from units represented on panel # 1. I am convinced that the views of senior NCOs, which many consider the backbone of any operational unit, are essential to an accurate assessment of readiness at the working level and I look forward to their unique perspective on these important issues.

The third panel, which I believe will lead off our afternoon session, will have commanders of individual training commands. One of the first indicators to show a decrease in readiness is difficulties

<sup>1</sup>Gen John Shalikashvili, speaking to the Association of the United States Army Sep 5, 1996

in meeting training objectives and I believe that our major training centers commanders will be able to give us their views in this area.

Our fourth panel will consist of spouses of military members. It is interesting to note that 65 per cent of all military personnel are married. As a result, the health and readiness of the military today can be gauged through the perspectives of the spouses of service members.

Before we get into hearing from our panels, I would yield to the Honorable Stephen Buyer, Chairman of the subcommittee on Military Personnel for any comments he may wish to make. I would then yield to the Honorable Norman Sisisky, the ranking Democrat on the Readiness subcommittee for any statement he would like to make. And last, but certainly not least, I would yield to the gentleman from Mississippi, the Honorable Gene Taylor, the ranking Democrat on the Personnel subcommittee.

As our first panel of witnesses we have Lieutenant General Thomas A. Schwartz, Commander, III Corps, Fort Hood, Texas; Lieutenant General Ronald W. Iverson, Commander, 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force, Osan AB, Korea; Vice Admiral Charles Abbot, Commander, 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet, and Lieutenant General Carlton W. Fulford, Commander 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, California.

General Schwartz, you may proceed.